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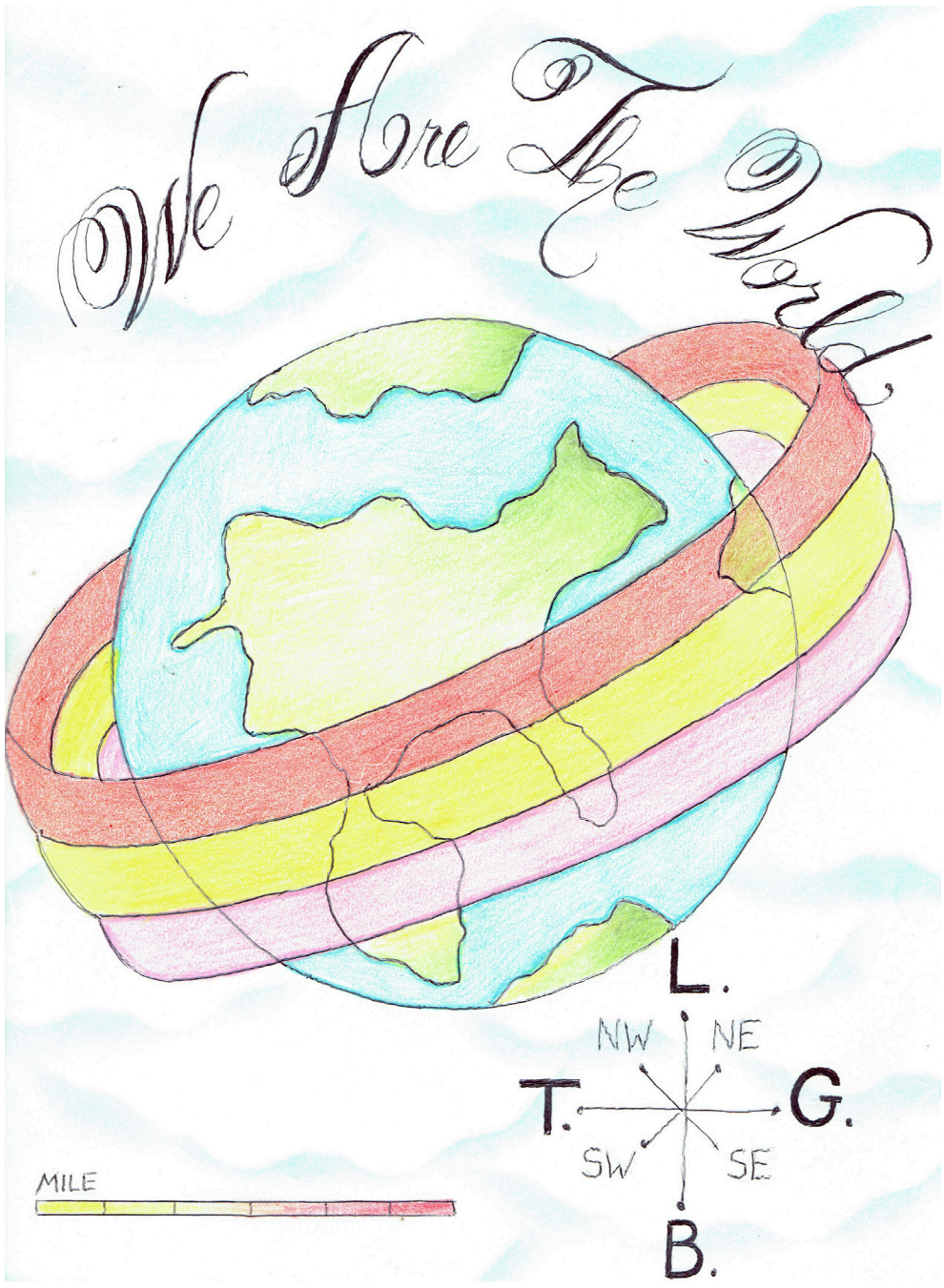

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COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

The STREET SHEET is a project of the Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition on Homelessness organizes poor and homeless people to create permanent solutions to poverty while protecting the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition's work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: they bring their agendas to us.

STREET SHEET STAFF

The Street Sheet is a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness. Some stories are collectively written, and some stories have individual authors. But whoever sets fingers to keyboard, all stories are formed by the collective work of dozens of volunteers, and our outreach to hundreds of homeless people.

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Cover Art: created with free images from freepik.com

A.B.O. Comix, Jordan Davis, Tatiana Lyulkin, Akir Jackson, G. "Coco" Wyatt, Harry J, Sirbrian Spease

Street Sheet is published and distributed on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone peoples. We recognize and honor the ongoing presence and stewardship of the original people of this land. We recognize that homelessness can not truly be ended until this land is returned to its original stewards.

ORGANIZE WITH US

HOUSING JUSTICE WORKING GROUP
TUESDAYS @ NOON
The Housing Justice Workgroup is working toward a San Francisco in which every human being can have and maintain decent, habitable, safe, and secure housing. This meeting is in English and Spanish and open to everyone! Email mcarrera@cohsf.org to get involved!

HUMAN RIGHTS WORKING GROUP
WEDNESDAYS @12:30
The Human Rights Workgroup has been doing some serious heavy lifting on these issues: conducting direct research, outreach to people on the streets, running multiple campaigns, developing policy, staging direct actions, capturing media attention, and so much more. All those down for the cause are welcome to join! Email lpierce@cohsf.org

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO JOIN OUR WORKING GROUP MEETINGS!

BEING QUEER AND ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

JORDAN DAVIS

As you might already know, I write mostly about permanent supportive housing and how San Francisco's government stands in the way of delivering effective services on time, under budget, and in a manner that works for everybody. I don't like to talk much about my past, but since it's Pride month, I'd like to share how being a neurodivergent, non-binary trans femme who began transitioning nine years ago has impacted me, especially as someone who is formerly homeless and marginally housed.

I was born in the mid-1980s in the OC—no, not Orange County, California, but Ocean County, New Jersey, although both counties share a conservative culture. My family, and much of the region, could best be described as white working class—the type of people who moved heavily towards Trump in 2016. Though we always had what we needed, we didn't always get what we wanted. I was raised to embrace masculine gender stereotypes by a functionally alcoholic, hot-tempered father and an Italian mom who was a disciplinarian. One of my formative memories was talking about wanting to be a girl on a bus back home from an overnight camping trip at the Delaware Water Gap and getting chewed out by my peers and adults at Cheesequake Service area. More than a decade later, I would go to the service area to change into feminine clothing heading north and masculine clothing going south back home during some lost years of my life.

Did I mention I was diagnosed with autism at the age of 5? It would set me up to repress my gender identity for a long time, since I didn't want to rock the boat. Plus, the Jersey Shore in the 1990s was not a safe place to be gay, especially at my chronically underfunded public schools. If there had been an openly gay student at my middle and high school, which had more fights than Madison Square Garden, there would have been a homophobic riot encouraged by the faculty. If such a queer student were murdered, the cops would have covered it up.

I don't like to talk much about my past, but since it's Pride month, I'd like to share how being a neurodivergent, non-binary trans femme who began transitioning nine years ago has impacted me, especially as someone who is formerly homeless and marginally housed.

I would say that I was an above average student, but a combination of relentless bullying, getting into extreme metal, and dressing in black in an environment that had zero tolerance for general rule-breaking, plus getting into a tussle with a local yokel police sergeant's kid, all pushed me to leave school. As a result, I developed a "fuck the police" attitude—something that would guide me as I ended up homeless in my adult life.

I ended up at a therapeutic board school where my peers continuously bullied me and a staff member sexually assaulted me, which contributed to my trauma. Then I went to college, where I managed to keep a full scholarship. But after flunking out of grad school, I got my first taste of extreme poverty, and one of my last memories in New Jersey was being forced to be drug tested to access the only clinic in my county that took Medicaid—that's why I reacted badly to the passage of Proposition F earlier this year, even though it wouldn't affect me. I feel like San Francisco had turned into Ocean County.

I experienced homelessness several times, both in Pennsylvania in my 20s and later in San Francisco. I've slept in a friend's art studio and got banned from a university. I've dealt with toxic roommates, which is why I prefer living alone. I've also had to go to church-sponsored drop-in centers with modest dress codes where predatory men prey on women, making me a firm believer of secular-run homeless services. Since a man tickled me at the first Navigation Center in the Mission District, I've rejected the shelter-first model in favor of housing first.

As for my gender transition, I am almost eight years into not having testicles and a little over two years into having a vagina. But even though I fled Pennsylvania to reach these transition-related milestones, I needed my own space with a private bathroom to support my transition. That was a challenge because San Francisco has historically housed its homeless in single-room occupancy hotels with shared bathrooms. There, I had to navigate around visitor policies for post-surgery care. Because of this, I support a scattered-site model for permanent supportive housing, not only for trans people like myself, but for everyone who experiences difficulties managing SRO life.

As I reflect on my experiences as a trans, queer person with a disability over the last nine years, I believe that we should recognize the intersectionality in our lives as we find our way home. ■

CONTRIBUTE TO STREET SHEET

WRITING: Write about your experience of homelessness in San Francisco, about policies you think the City should put in place or change, your opinion on local issues, or about something newsworthy happening in your neighborhood!

ARTWORK: Help transform ART into ACTION by designing artwork for STREET SHEET! We especially love art that uplifts homeless people, celebrates the power of community organizing, or calls out abuses of power!

PHOTOGRAPHY: Have a keen eye for beauty? Love capturing powerful moments at events? Have a photo of a Street Sheet vendor you'd like to share? We would love to run your photos in Street Sheet!

VISIT WWW.STREETSHEET.ORG/SUBMIT-YOUR-WRITING/

OR BRING SUBMISSIONS TO 280 TURK STREET TO BE CONSIDERED PIECES ASSIGNED BY THE EDITOR MAY OFFER PAYMENT, ASK FOR DETAILS!

A Place To Belong

by,

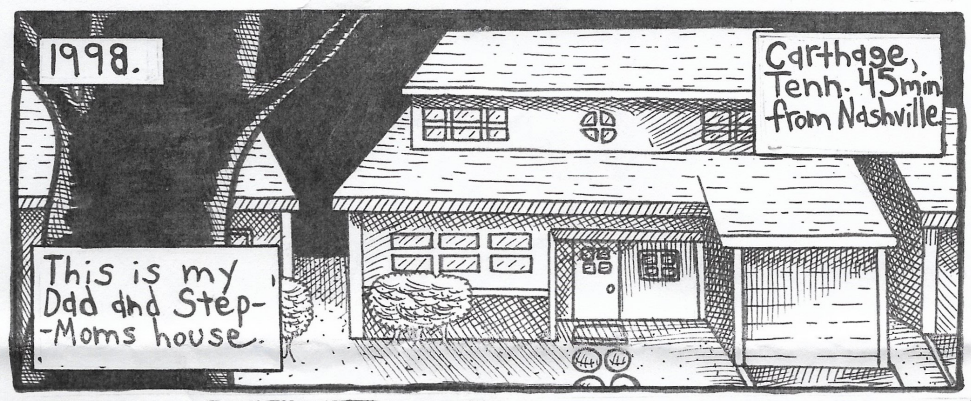
Gabriel Wyatt ABO COMIX

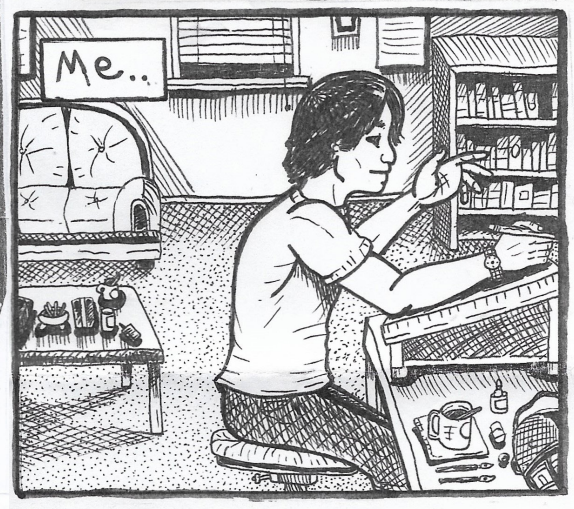
G. "COCO" WYATT

A.B.O. Comix is a collective of creators and activists who work to amplify the voices of LGBTQ prisoners through art. By working closely with prison abolitionist and queer advocacy organizations, we aim to keep queer prisoners connected to outside community and help them in the fight toward liberation. The profits we generate go back to incarcerated artists, especially those with little to no resources. Using the DIY ideology of "punk-zine" culture, A.B.O. was formed with the philosophy of mutual support, community and friendship.

Our collective is working towards compassionate accountability without relying on the state or its sycophants. A.B.O. believes our interpersonal and societal issues can be solved without locking people in cages. Our mission is to combat the culture that treats humans as disposable and disproportionately criminalizes the most marginalized amongst us. Through artistic activism, we hope to proliferate the idea that a better world means redefining our concepts of justice.

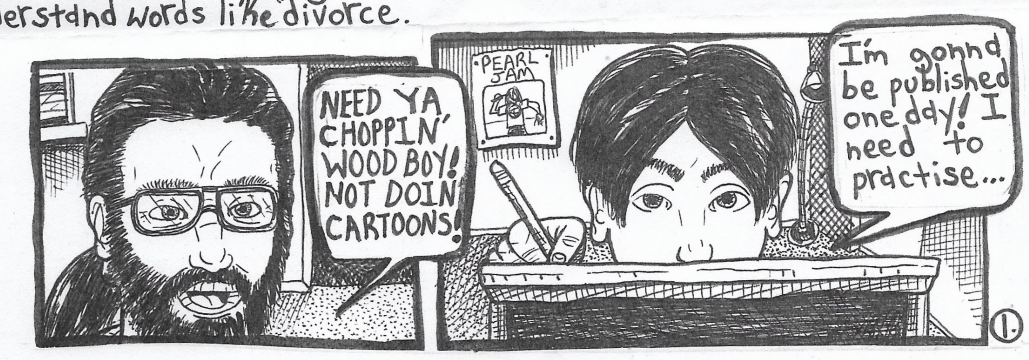
https://www.abocomix.com/



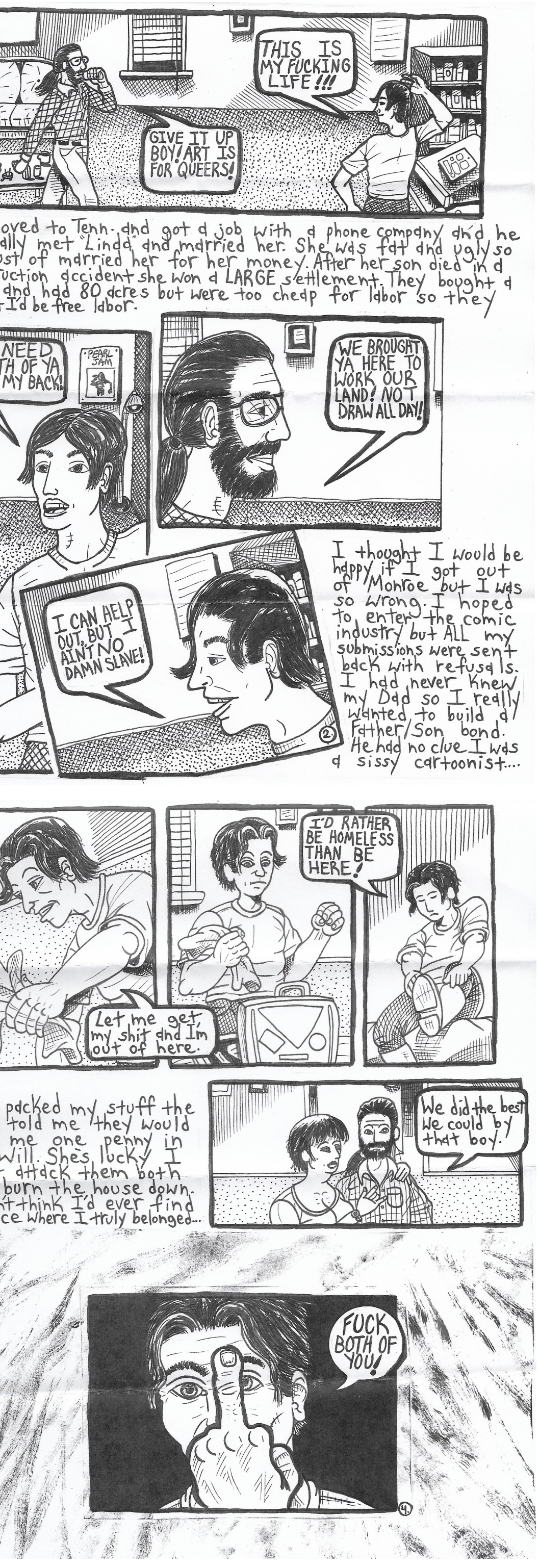


My name is Gabriel, but you can call me Gabe. I'm from a small La. town called Monroe. Most people never heard of it. Wish I hadn't either. At 18 I took my few belongings and left. Took a Greyhound for Tenn.

In 1983 when I was 4 my Dad Gary put down his book and walked out the door. He moved to Tenn. without even a glance back at his wife and 3 kids. Mom was crushed. Us kids were too young to understand words like "divorce".



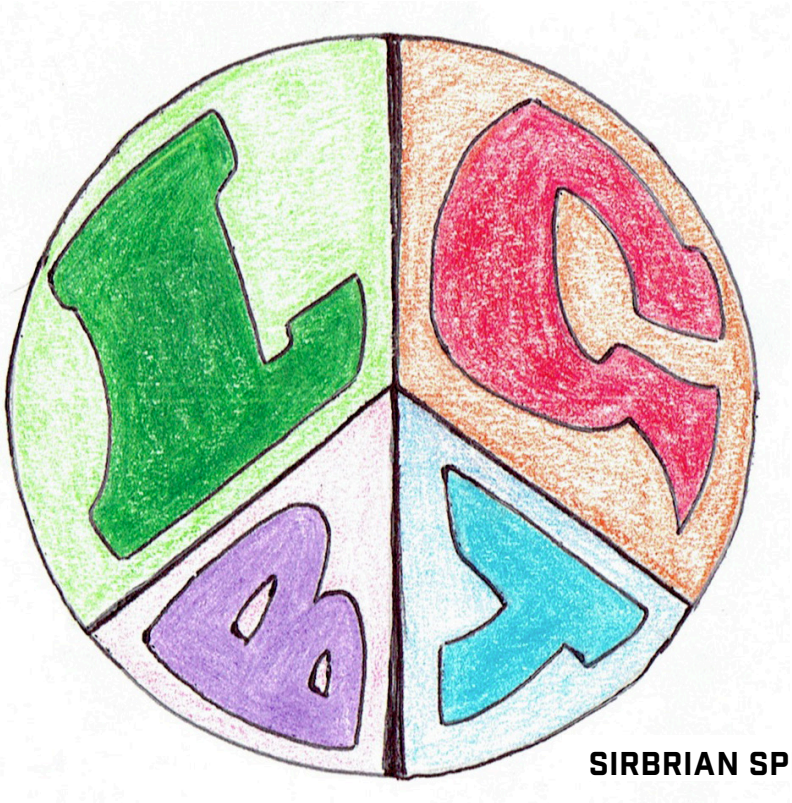
Mom had to bring him to court for child-support, but that process took a couple years. We lost the house and car and had to move into an apt that was Government assisted for single Mothers and elderly people. Us kids were way too young to understand that we were living in the "Ghetto." We were forced to rely on Welfare and Food Stamps in order to survive.



YOU AND I

by Tatiana Lyulkin

Your eyes
Are the color of the sea
After the storm.
You and I,
Explorers and fearless voyagers
At one
With the nature and the night,
Seeking safety and comfort
In each other's arms.
We share
What little we have
With each other
And with the world.
You wear
My old Stanford sweatshirt,
Your mother's wedding ring
Is on a silver chain
Around my neck.
You and I,
Stone cold and gentle,
Lovers, survivors, street poets,
Our lives battered
And forever altered
By the storm.
Our green tent
Is between the Ferry Building
And the Fire Station,
The City by the Bay is our home
And we always come back-
Night after night.
You and I,
Forgotten but not lost,
Surviving the storm
Together,
As one,
One precious moment
At a time.



SIRBRIAN SPEASE

STRUGGLING FOR VISIBILITY AS A BLACK TRANS PERSON

AKIR JACKSON

Each morning I wake up invisible, just another faceless black body people avoid seeing on San Francisco's streets. As a transgender homeless man who hasn't medically transitioned, the world interacts with the gender assigned to me at birth, not my true male identity. This erasure compounded with anti-Blackness leaves me dehumanized and rejected by all sides.

When seeking shelter, I'm turned away from men's quarters and told to sleep with women based on my sex assigned at birth. This forces me into unsafe situations that leave me vulnerable to violence, sexual harassment, and assault. Health care centers also refuse to acknowledge or respect my male gender identity. Being repeatedly misgendered and called by my deadname by staff causes deep gender dysphoria. The humiliation makes me avoid seeking medical care altogether, no matter how unwell I become.

Without access to hormones or gender-affirming surgeries, my feminine-presenting body distorts the man I know myself to be inside. I bind my chest tightly with Ace bandages or duct tape, despite the pain and restricted breathing it causes. This is my only method to conceal my anatomy. I wear oversized, baggy clothes that hide my shape, praying I pass enough to avoid notice. But passersby still leer, mock, and shout at me on the street, "Is it a he or she?". With my masculinity and dignity stripped from me daily, I'm left feeling emasculated, powerless and adrift.

As a Black transgender person unable to safely transition due to poverty, I am trapped in an endless cycle of job discrimination. Most employers take one look at my nonconforming appearance and declare that I'm not the "right fit" for the role, shutting the door in my face. For the few desperate enough to reluctantly hire me, the workplace harassment about my looks and gender quickly becomes unbearable. I withstand staff and customers' bullying for as long as I can before I inevitably return to the streets, without even the meager wages I need to survive.

Navigating public spaces comes with near constant dread to a visibly queer Black trans person like me. Transphobes and racists see me as an easy target for their ignorance and hate. I've been verbally and physically attacked countless times simply for existing in my skin. Slurs, spit, blows rain down on me without cause. I've been jumped, beaten unconscious, ransacked while passed out on the sidewalk. With no safe refuge, each day compounds the trauma of the last. I sleep with one eye open, ever vigilant of the dangers surrounding me.

In a city filled with rainbow flags and "All Are Welcome" stickers, my overlapping identities are left unacknowledged. Mainstream LGBTQ+ spaces cater exclusively to white, cisgenderand binary narratives that exclude transgender men like myself. Black communities frequently retain rigid, heteronormative ideas of masculinity and gender that further marginalize my queer identity from yet another direction. I'm left stranded somewhere between, forced into limbo—a perpetual outsider no matter where I turn.

Beneath their polished facades of progress and inclusion, San Francisco's systems continue to fail society's most vulnerable. Without access to basic resources, community support or safety nets, I'm discarded like garbage into filthy alleys and underpasses. The cold indifference of a city that would prefer that I didn't exist just to preserve its own self-image.

But I refuse to be erased or made ashamed. My life and dignity hold innate value and worth, despite what this city tells me through its active neglect. Resilient and defiant, I persist so that future generations of transgender people may live fully in their truth without fear of the discrimination I've endured. My identity is no less real, valid or masculine for transcending cisgender conventions of gender. And I will be seen, heard, embraced and valued exactly as the man I am, in all my complex intersections.

The systemic change I've waited lifetimes for is long overdue—not just tolerance, but full humanity, equity and compassionate care accessible to all. Our liberation is intricately intertwined, and progress rests on lifting up society's most marginalized voices. The revolution begins by listening to those pushed aside, abandoned on the outskirts to suffer. For only then can we build a city where identities no longer dictate destiny, and our shared humanity rests above all. ■

BECOME A VENDOR
MAKE MONEY AND HELP END HOMELESSNESS!

STREET SHEET is currently recruiting vendors to sell the newspaper around San Francisco.

Vendors pick up the papers for free at our office in the Tenderloin and sell them for $2 apiece at locations across the City. You get to keep all the money you make from sales! Sign up to earn extra income while also helping elevate the voices of the homeless writers who make this paper so unique, and promoting the vision of a San Francisco where every human being has a home.

TO SIGN UP, VISIT OUR OFFICE AT 280 TURK ST FROM 10AM-4PM ON MONDAY-THURSDAY AND 10AM-NOON ON FRIDAY

NOTES FROM A TEXAS PRISON:
BILLY'S STORY

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is adapted from multiple pieces of correspondence by Billy Thomas, an inmate at the John Wynne Unit of Texas State Prison in Huntsville to A.B.O. Comix in Oakland, California throughout 2022 and 2023. It has been edited for brevity and clarity.

I am a 51-year-old person, a two-spirited transgender. I am a survivor of mental and sexual abuse from my time in the care of Texas Child Protective Services, state schools, homes and hospitals, and I was forced to overcome the long term side effects of mind-altering drugs.

I began sharing my story and pain of the abduction by CPS and the mental state that came from mental health meds and the sexual abuse through my art and bio at A.B.O. Comix, with the friendship/mentorship of Casper Cendre.

I strive to heal and overcome this capital life sentence that I have now served 19 years of because of the mind-altering mental health meds and sexual abuse that crippled me at trial and during the crime, I now have an outsider interceding on my behalf to Texas Governor Greg Abbott for a new trial or pardon.

The mental illness was brought to the attention of the Johnson County judge in 1992 by a Vernon State Hospital doctor who informed the court after mental health evaluation that if I am not sent back for treatment that I can and will kill myself and/or others, and that my mental health will worsen.

The judge sent me to prison from 1994 to 1998, where gang members beat and raped me, and attempted to kill me by throwing off the third-row tier.

In 1998, I met my kids' mother only to find out she is my sister by my mother [and] yet another father. CPS took my kids in 2000 in Waco, Texas, which helped worsen my mental state and my flashbacks of the rape, then the fear of this same harm happening to my kid.

This led me to killing a man, which got me and my brother life for the crime I did while mentally ill and full of mind-altering meds. I blacked out in 2002 and killed [him]. No mental health evaluation was offered at trial, and all mental health history was offered to the jury.

The Fort Worth District Attorney and court-appointed worked out a deal with others facing life to lie on me in exchange for their freedom. Other charges were pending in my indictment to make my charge capital murder.

I am IQ 70, on Thorazine, which altered my mind on trial and kept me from a fair trial and mental health evaluation.

For the past 19 years, I've been played/extorted out of my money by fake jailhouse attorneys.

Refusing the mental health meds, I underwent healing through mentorship of my friend and family Casper Cendre, who helped me grow in art skills and heal.
I share my story with others in hope of helping others and myself find help from outsiders with the heart, money and/or legal schooling to help me get my case back into court or pardon, with the understanding that I'll be sent to Vernon State Hospital.

I pray you will petition the Governor and Senator John Whitmire for their grace in the Integrity Division [illegible] my mental state that I still strive to fully overcome as I, a transgender person, survive COVID and further abuse by gangs and corporate guards here in Texas prison as medical attention is kept from me.

Now at the age of 51, I look back over some years of my past at the many mind games I have witnessed.

Now I am healing and dealing with being a two-spirited person, both male and female, and the strength it takes to avoid the queer-bashing guards and gangbangers.

I have overcome mind-altering meds and the mental illness they caused me on top of the rape that I suffered in CPS care and state prison.

I am still overcoming the death of my mother and loss of my kids to CPS and now COVID-19 and the unsafe housing for transgender, LGBTQ, and mentally ill people.

Waking up in Texas State Prison at age 51, I am still healing and overcoming with the help of friends, family and mentor at A.B.O. Comix, Casper Cendre, at home seeking help in sharing art and the bio of my life, and the life I am now coming to walk proudly without hiding in fear of queer bashers.

Sincerely,
Billy D. Thomas 01275621 ■

artwork by Harry J

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